UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

Reply to:
Attn of: ECO-081
Date: May 30, 2002

To: Discussion Group Participants
From: Judy Smith, Community Involvement Coordinator

Thank you for taking time to participate in a group discussion about the Portland Harbor Superfund site earlier this month.

The meeting facilitator, Dr. Robin Gregory of Decision Research, has prepared a draft summary of the comments from your meeting. This summary is attached for your review and comment. If you would like to see any additions or changes, please let Joe Creamer or me know about them by June 15. Our toll free number is 1-800-424-4372, and our e-mails are smith.judy@epa.gov or creamer.joseph@epa.gov.

Please note that Dr. Gregory uses a tracking system that numbers each category of comments. These numbers do not indicate any ranking or priority setting. This summary is intended to capture what was said at the meeting, so not everyone will agree with all the comments noted here.

After any final changes are made, we will send out the final version of meeting notes in June. In approximately three months, we will be contacting you again to set up a time for the follow-up meeting.

We appreciate your participation in the discussion group!

Portland Harbor Superfund: Business group values

(Numbers are for reference only and do not imply any priority)

1.0 Health of river

1.1 Water quality and vitality

Ensure sufficient water flows

1.2 Fish abundance

Improve health of fish populations over time

1.3 Science knowledge

Reduce uncertainties relating to fisheries improvement actions

Account for assimilative capacity of different ground types

Improve availability of technical information

2.0 Recreation & aesthetics

2.1 Boating & swimming

Improve boating opportunities on river

2.2 Fishing

Improve fishing opportunities on river

Ensure that fish caught on river are safe to eat

3.0 Economic development

Ensure that new regulations do not adversely affect existing businesses

Create new opportunities for economic development

Make use of local businesses for cleanup initiatives

Achieve certainty of environmental standards so that businesses can operate

4.0 Cultural & social

4.1 values at risk

Improve public access to riverbanks

Ensure that river retains social vitality (e.g., as gathering place)

Ensure equitable allocation of payments from different responsible parties

4.2 perceptions of risk

Minimize adverse effects on area due to perceptions of site as contaminated

Ensure timely cleanup process

5.0 Political & Superfund responsibilities

Ensure that cleanup process is fiscally responsible

Avoid recontamination from upstream users

Identify and locate responsible parties

Clarify relationship between cleanup and punitive objectives

6.0 Decision making process

Need clear definition of the problem that cleanup will be addressing
Ensure that process includes, and balances across, all uses of river
Define clean: should meet criteria for acceptable risk to human health and environment
Establish clear links between river cleanup and prevention of urban sewer runoff
Recognize harm being done to people in area today due to Superfund designation

7.0 Public involvement & education

Communicate rationale for cleanup steps and timing of decisions
Engage in outreach with local businesses to define best management practices
Distribute summary (at least) of DEQ source control document
Improve communication about need for habitat improvements (type and cost)

8.0 Human health

Ensure cleanup to level so that people can safely make use of river
Water quality should be to standards that people could drink a few gulps and be fine

Portland Harbor Superfund: Neighborhood group values

(Numbers are for reference only and do not imply any priority)

1.0 Health of river

1.1 Water quality and river vitality

Clean enough for sensitive organisms

Avoid accumulative pollution/contamination (higher up food chain)

Restore bird & wildlife habitat along riverbanks where no uses compete

Address issues stemming from reductions in seasonal water flows

1.2 Fish abundance

Protect fish from adverse effects due to cleanup activities (dredging, capping)

Control bank erosion to protect sensitive fish habitat

1.3 Science knowledge

Sample deep water holes (fear that deposits will be released in floods)

Increase knowledge of long-term effects of capping riverbed

Understand potential for ground water contamination from inland sources

What is known about long-term effects of capping river on aquatic life?

Effectiveness of riparian vegetation in terms of filtering incoming water

Identify potential side effects of cleanup actions

Compare effectiveness of natural fixes (revegetation) to technological fixes (caps)

Address key scientific uncertainties

2.0 Recreation & aesthetics

2.1 Boating & swimming

Water quality sufficient to permit safe boating and occasional wading/swimming

Avoid overcrowding of boating (need restrictions on use?)

2.2 Fishing

Maintain and improve recreational fishing opportunities

2.3 Aesthetics

Ensure river is clear enough to see through

Avoid junk being dumped in river

3.0 Economic development

Retain shipping jobs

Protect current residents from adverse property value effects due to Superfund designation

Establish tax incentives for businesses (to cleanup, to recycle, to start new processes)

4.0 Cultural & social

4.1 values at risk

Improve quality of subsistence fishing (carp, sturgeon, and salmon)

Provide for new public access as some industrial uses cease

Retain mixed uses of area (commercial, residential, open space)

4.2 perceptions of risk

Address cultural barriers to knowledge of risks

Provide information addresses current perceptions and misperceptions of risks

5.0 Political & Superfund responsibilities

Clarify how sewer outfalls fit into overall Superfund responsibilities

Ensure that all PRPs come forth and accept responsibility, willingly or unwillingly

Ensure that PRPs are held financially responsible

Guard against recontamination of river through groundwater contamination

Use public funds wisely: do benefits of actions outweigh costs?

Demonstrate accountability: pull permits of polluters, enforce (fine) violators

Provide funds for long-term monitoring of river

Strengthen mandate of DEQ

6.0 Decision making process

Address whole problem, upstream as well (thru Salem/Albany)

Decide on desirable end state for this section of river: how clean is clean?

Establish Partnerships with city and upriver communities

Learn from other river cleanups -- what worked, what didn't work-- and other CAGs

Improve transparency of process where possible

Communicate reasons for time delays: is it stalling or necessary to complete work?

Minimize costly litigation and legal wrangles

Establish periodic and open reviews of cleanup process: how is it going?

Establish mechanisms for public oversight of technical cleanup decisions

7.0 Public involvement & education

Initiate culture-specific education programs about risks (fish, water, and soils)

Continue current public-involvement initiatives

Educate public about natural river cycles (e.g., some dirt in water is normal!)

Educate public to prevent future contamination of river

Educate business to change attitudes toward pollution

Tell success stories of this Superfund site cleanup and other sites

8.0 Human health

Clean so that it is OK to ingest small amounts of water

Ensure water clean enough so that with normal treatment it is OK to drink

Portland Harbor Superfund: Recreation group values

(Numbers are for reference only and do not imply any priority)

1.0 Health of river

1.1 Water quality and vitality

Establish long-term plan for water quality improvements (include upstream uses)

Improve conditions for wildlife

1.2 Fish abundance

Improve river conditions to support healthy population of bottom fish (e.g., carp, suckers, bass, perch, and catfish)

Improve river conditions to support healthy population of migratory fish (e.g., salmon)

1.3 Science knowledge

Initiate study to explore tradeoffs associated with capping river bottom (e.g., future dredging needs to maintain deep-water port, ground-feeding fish, etc).

Define past status (15 years ago) of insect life in river (e.g., presence of stone flies)

Establish better information re. long-term health effects of eating fish (e.g., mercury)

Establish disposal options for spoils (contaminated soils taken from river)

2.0 Recreation & aesthetics

2.1 Boating & swimming

Clean river so that boating and swimming opportunities are improved

Improve shoreline access for public boaters

2.2 Fishing

Improve conditions for fishing from riverbanks

2.3 Aesthetics

Reduce sludge buildup on beaches and shoreline

Improve quality of air and shoreline water

Reduce seasonally-strong odors from river

Improve aesthetics of riverbank developments

3.0 Economic development

Establish balanced cleanup standards so as to retain existing industries

Establish incentives to encourage new (cleaner?) industries to come into area

4.0 Cultural & social

4.1 values at risk

Ensure that subsistence fishing can be done safely

Ensure good communication with non-English speakers (Asian, Hispanic, Afro-Am)

Protect against erosion of civic pride due to Superfund designation

Ensure public rights are recognized with respect to access (above high-water line)

4.2 perceptions of risk

Provide specific risk information (e.g., exposure via fish meat vs. heads or skin)

Ensure that river cleanup takes account of community perceptions of risk

5.0 Political & Superfund responsibilities

Ensure that dredging does not make current problems worse (releases from deep deposits)

Enlarge scope of cleanup beyond in-river to control re-contamination from riverbanks

Stop or greatly reduce current pollution/discharges into river through enforcement actions

Stop current pollution of river at source, including sewage discharges from Portland

Recognize that going slowly in cleanup leads to apathy

6.0 Decision making process

Define what it means to have a clean river

Improve inter-agency communication re. zoning and land-use restrictions

Facilitate and explore novel, creative solutions to cleanup problems (e.g., bioremediation)

Ensure that fringe groups (extreme points of view) are brought into debates about priorities

Establish monitoring to ensure long-term retention of benefits of cleanup

Address tradeoffs in cleanup process -- how much, how quickly, to what standards?

Establish clear benchmarks to use in measuring progress

Recognize community expertise: ensure that public still has input to "technical" decisions

7.0 Public involvement & education

Improve citizen access to Superfund site information

Ensure that justification is given for what appear to be lengthy delays in Superfund process

Provide rationale when deadlines are moved until later (if not, breeds mistrust)

Enhance public profile of Superfund site cleanup, which is not now a major issue in Portland

Improve quality and depth of coverage of Superfund operations in newspapers and TV

8.0 Human health

Clean river so that boating and swimming can be done safely (no risks to health)

Portland Harbor Superfund: Environmental group values

(Numbers are for reference only and do not imply any priority)

1.0 Health of river

1.1 Water quality and vitality

Improve water quality and aquatic life in river (e.g., benthic organisms)

Restore vegetation along riverbanks (e.g., new planting in riparian areas)

Restore river shore & bank habitat needed by birds (osprey, blue heron) and mammals

1.2 Fish abundance

Increase abundance and health of fish populations

Improve bottom substrate for spawning of local fish (carp, etc)

Improve passage for migrating fish (e.g., salmon)

Improve structure and morphology of river

1.3 Science knowledge

Improve database: right now, insufficient data to support planned actions

Establish more aggressive sampling program to test fish, soils, and upland areas

Establish scientific criteria to identify best available technologies

Ensure that cumulative risks (across sites, over time) are given sufficient study

2.0 Recreation & aesthetics

2.1 Boating & swimming

Provide improved boating and swimming opportunities (e.g., at Kelley Point Park)

2.2 Fishing

Provide improved fishing opportunities

2.3 Aesthetics

Address odor and visual problems (e.g., occasional sheen on river surface)

3.0 Economic development

Retain current business and industrial emphasis of area

Provide long-term environmental standards that permit mixed uses of river

4.0 Cultural & social

4.1 values at risk

Improve public access to river

Provide edible fish for subsistence uses (both Tribal and general population)

4.2 perceptions of risk

Address perception that risks remain high because businesses are consulted first

Find creative ways to identify and address public perceptions of risk

Address issues of lack of trust with government agencies

Take action to address perception that industry has undue influence on cleanup timing

5.0 Political & Superfund responsibilities

Avoid recontamination of cleaned site due to upstream river uses

Stop current discharges to river

Avoid recontaminating site as part of cleanup process (e.g., will dredging make it worse?)

Ensure that enforcement plans have teeth

6.0 Decision making process

Ensure that current scientific uncertainties don't provide excuse for inaction

Define end-state for cleanup process: what does it mean to have "clean" but not pristine river

Need to balance multiple uses of river

Clarify relation of river cleanup to control of sewage outclass and urban runoff

Search for creative mechanisms for reshaping character of contaminated sites

Establish long-term plan to monitor river after clean up is completed

Ensure that all legal commitments are met

Establish mechanisms for detailed, early public input to technical studies

7.0 Public involvement & education

Improve communication with public: provide technical details, not just simplified story

Design programs to connect people with river, overcoming historical disconnection

Modify current public opinions about contamination of Willamette River

Need to get out message that Superfund designation alone doesn't resolve problems

Convey urgency for public participation (because cleanup agenda now being formed)

Provide community with rationale for 10-15 year duration of cleanup actions

8.0 Human health

Ensure water in river after cleanup meets legal requirements for safety

Ensure studies address long-term health effects of exposure to PBTs (dioxin, pesticides)